



THE BROWNFIELDS STUDY GROUP 2002

Members

John Antaramian
Beverly Craig
Nancy Frank
Arthur Harrington
Bruce A. Keyes
Larry Kirch
Peter McAvoy
Tom Mueller
Peter Peshek
Jeff Schoepke
John Stibal
Joy W. Stieglitz
Mark Thimke
Sam Tobias

Senator Alberta Darling, Co-Chair
Joint Finance Committee
Room 317 East
Madison, WI 53707

April 22, 2003

Dear Senator Darling,

On behalf of the Brownfields Study Group, we are writing to support the brownfields-related recommendations in the governor's executive budget for FY 2003-05. As you are aware, the Brownfields Study Group has been actively involved in the development of state policy and budgets dealing with environmental cleanups and reuse of contaminated properties since 1998. Study Group members firmly believe that the creation and enhancement of these state brownfields programs and policies are critical to helping grow Wisconsin's economy.

The governor is currently proposing that the existing brownfields grant programs be consolidated into one single program at the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). While we did not propose such a consolidation, we do understand and support the governor's efforts to gain efficiencies and save on administrative costs. Since the DNR is most-often involved in the technical oversight of a brownfields project, and has other funds available to assist the project (e.g., Land Recycling Loans and Stewardship funds), we understand the proposal to consolidate the brownfields financial programs at the DNR.

The Brownfields Study Group would like to assure the members of the Legislature that we will continue to work closely with the DNR and the Department of Commerce to ensure a smooth transition between agencies, if this transfer occurs. In addition, the Brownfields Study Group, as in the past, will assist the DNR with development of new administrative rules that meet the objectives of the former programs by: providing funds for local governments to jump-start economically challenged brownfields; and providing funds for redevelopment and cleanup at economic development and green space projects. Based on more than five years of working closely with the DNR's brownfields staff, we have confidence that they can develop and manage a nationally recognized brownfields grant program that deals with both environmental and economic development aspects.

We also support the governor's technical changes to the budget, which were submitted to the Legislature by the Department of Administration on March 17, 2003. Specifically, we support the language directing the DNR to make awards to the Commerce brownfields and DNR green space grant applicants, whose otherwise successful applications were not funded in Fiscal Year 2003, due to the budget deficit reduction efforts taken this spring. These grant awards would be based on the existing statutes and rules in place when the applications were submitted. Funding for these specific grants should be limited to what would have been available for these two grant programs in fiscal year 2003, prior to 2003 Act 1.

The Brownfields Study Group is working with the DNR on some enhancements to the proposed budget language that consolidates the brownfields grant programs. Those recommendations will be forwarded to you in the near future. We would like to also recommend that the DNR's Land Recycling Loan Program be replenished to the former level of \$20 million. As you may recall, Clean Water Fund moneys fund the Land Recycling Loan Program, and those funds will be depleted by the end of this biennium. In a period of financial challenges, this is a steady source of funds to clean up contaminated properties that we should not lose.

Please do not hesitate to call any of the members of the Brownfields Study Group if you should have questions. The contact information for our group is enclosed with this letter. We thank you in advance for your support and consideration in our efforts to return Wisconsin's contaminated properties back to productive use.

Sincerely,

John Antaramian, Mayor
City of Kenosha

Attachment